

## **THE SAFE AT HOME ACT AGENCIES' FAQ**

### **Q. What is Safe at Home?**

**A.** Safe at Home (SAH) is an address confidentiality program. It provides a substitute address (most likely a P.O. Box) for survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, trafficking or stalking to use on all public records. The bill does not affect pre-existing public records.

### **Q. Do any other states have similar programs?**

**A.** Yes, there are 33 states that have address confidentiality programs (ACP). The Iowa program resembles the Missouri and Minnesota programs.

### **Q. Who can apply to participate?**

**A.** Any adult victim or survivor of domestic violence, sexual assault, trafficking or stalking; any family member living in the same home with the victim, any minor child or children, or an incapacitated person who is in fear for his or her safety can apply to SAH. SAH participants must be Iowa residents. Eligible victims and survivors have taken some action with law enforcement against their offender, such as filing a complaint, seeking a protective order or cooperating with a police report.

### **Q. How do participants apply?**

**A.** Victims or survivors must complete application forms prescribed by the Secretary of State. The application can be submitted on-line or by the United States Postal Service via an application assistant. Application forms will be accepted on face value.

### **Q. Where can participants use the substitute address?**

**A.** City, county and state offices, such as city clerks, county auditors, county treasurers, schools, the Department of Transportation, the Department of Human Services and other similar offices are required to accept the substitute address when presented with certification from a program participant. Private organizations requiring a mailing address must also accept the substitute address as the participant's legal address. The confidential address does not apply to real estate records.

### **Q. How can an agency or organization verify if a person is enrolled in SAH?**

**A.** Participants may present their enrollment cards to verify participation. Agencies may request SAH to verify participation – this request will probably have to be made in writing. It is unlikely that verification will be made over the telephone.

**Q. Who has access to application and contact information?**

**A.** Only SAH program staff members can access the participant database. Safe at Home is required to release the information to the Iowa Child Support Recovery Unit and to a court if directed by court order. Also, if the SAH program receives a law enforcement request, information will be released to the requesting officer.

**Q. Will a state or local agency be notified when a participant is terminated from the program?**

**A.** The SAH program will not send notice to public nor private organizations when an participant is terminated or has graduated from the program. Mail that is “returned to sender” may be determined to constitute program termination. Participants may also notify agencies through another change of address.

**Q. How can state and local agencies be certain that participants will receive mail sent to them?**

**A.** When a participant's mail is received in the SAH office, it is forwarded to the participant's mailing address within two to three business days. Agencies and participants must understand that mail could be delayed up to seven days. We anticipate that SAH will scan all incoming mail prior to forwarding.

**Q. If participants change their address or change their names, can they enroll?**

**A.** Yes, however participants who legally change their names or addresses while participating in Safe at Home must notify the SAH program of the change. Failure to provide notification will result in being cancelled from the program.

**Q. How do participants register to vote?**

**A.** Participants' voter registration applications / updates will be submitted to the state registrar of voters, instead of to the county commissioners of elections. Participants' voter registration records will not be visible in the state voter registration system.

**Q. Can participants vote in person on Election Day?**

**A.** No. Safe at Home participants must vote by absentee ballot. Ballot requests will be handled by the SAH program staff and the State Commissioner of Elections.

**Q. How do I serve notice on a SAH participant?**

**A.** The SOS serves as the agent of service for program participants. All served notices will be forwarded to the participant via certified mail. If service is refused, the SAH program may terminate the participant.